

A Japanese Student's Walking Trip

Rev. Stephen W. Ryder, Tokyo.



The Students and Waitresses in the Hotel Dining Room—Mr. Ryder in the center.



ONE of the many good features of the Japanese school system is the educational walking trip. Two of these trips are taken each year to some spot of great natural beauty or to some place of historic interest—in Japan, the latter usually includes the former. Places of historic interest are carefully marked with tablets and monuments setting forth the historic associations. This side of the educational system keeps vividly alive in the mind historic personages and occurrences. Mr. Hoffsummer recently took a group of some fifteen students from Meiji Gakuin on one of these walking trips and kindly invited me to join the company.

Winding our way along the narrow streets of the water-front we boarded a little coasting steamer for Uruga—about half a day's journey. To produce new sensations, this vibrating craft was as good as some of the latest mechanical shockers of Coney Island. It was enjoyable until it began to rain; then if it became less pleasant, it became more interesting. The whole company of about seventeen crawled into the little dry-goods-box-like cabin, about eight feet long, five feet wide and four feet high. The reader may work out the simple sum, how many layers seventeen men would make in a box of this size. But everybody was in holiday



MONUMENT ERECTED TO PERRY BY THE JAPANESE

good humor, and an occasional song threatened to drown the loud-complaining machinery, though the throbbing of the engine served for the strokes of a baton. Every one seemed glad to get off at Uruga and stretch his limbs, even though it was raining. Some of us, too hopeful of the weather, had come without umbrellas, but that was not a serious matter in this land of bamboo and paper, and I was soon equipped with a good, artistic parachute at an outlay of seventeen and one-half cents.

A short walk from Uruga brought us to the part of the seashore where Commo-



THRESHING RICE NEAR THE SHORE

dore Perry is said to have first landed. Here the Japanese have erected a monument. It seems significant that a memorial of this kind should have been built by the Japanese to commemorate the beginning of their intercourse with America. A tea-house nearby is kept by an old man who saw Commodore Perry when he came in 1853.

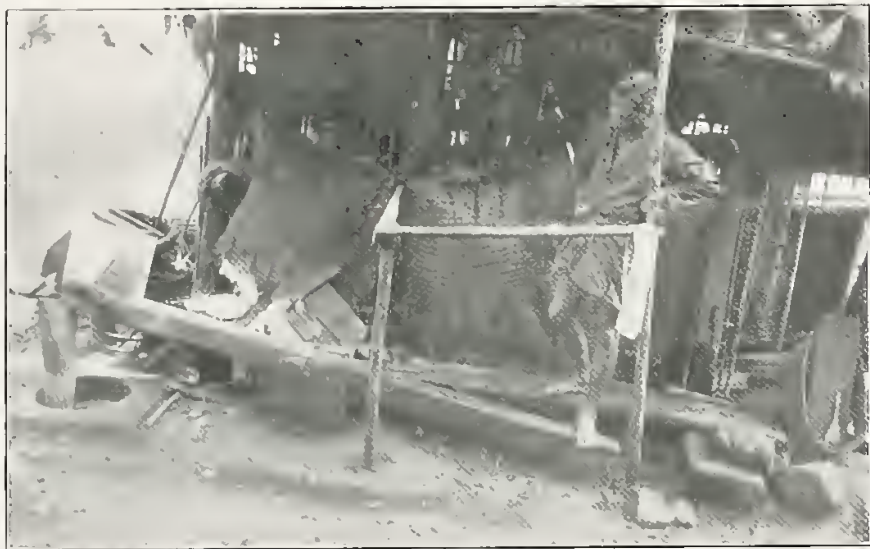
After a day's tramp through the rain it was very refreshing to leave our shoes and wet garments at the door of the inn, don the kimono furnished guests by the innkeeper, and then take a plunge into



WOMAN PULLING HEADS FROM RICE STALKS ON A METAL SAW-LIKE DEVICE WITH PROJECTING TEETH

a Japanese hot bath—the bath par excellence. The tubs are built much higher than ours, so that the bather can sit and have the water up to his neck. Then at an inn the bath is often large enough for from two to five to go in at once. This is not as bad as it may appear, because the Japanese are scrupulously clean and scrub themselves thoroughly with soap, and usually with a scrubbing brush before entering the bath. Arriving at our rooms, we find hibachi of charcoal glowing cheerfully, and the maid serves us with tea and cakes. It is customary to serve meals individually in the room, since the bed and blankets are stowed away in a closet during the daytime, to be taken out at bedtime and spread on the clean matting floor. But we arranged to take dinner all together. This was easily done, because the dividing walls of the apartments are sliding doors of card-board or thin wood which can be readily removed. So we all sat down on zabuton (cushions) and after prayer, kept the chop-sticks busy. Three maids in the middle of the circle were also kept busy filling the students' bowls with rice from the great wooden tubs. The annexed picture taken in the Misaki Inn at breakfast in the morning gives a fair idea of eating à la Japanese.

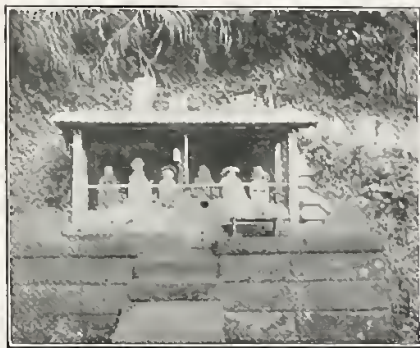
After the regular course was over the maids brought on tea, persimmons tied up in clusters, and a great variety of fancy cakes. Then the students played some games of a novel nature, in which Mr.



BOY POUNDING CHAFF FROM RICE. THE RICE IS IN A STONE RECEPTACLE -AND THE WOODEN POUNDER DESCENDS INTO IT WHEN RELEASED BY THE BOY'S FOOT

Hoffsommer took a helpful part, and in which the writer entered somewhat cautiously. Each student assumed a different pose of Buddha, then at a signal given by the leader, each changed his pose to that of the man on his right. When this game is played quickly, as it should be, it is a very striking exhibition. Some of the students were very good at juggling chop-sticks and cups. The most comical game was one in which two fellows sat down facing each other, each with a pair of chop-sticks, and a single bowl placed between them. Tapping the bowl with the chop-sticks, each proceeded very calmly to pinch the other's nose with the chop-sticks. The one who laughed first was the loser. This was done so deliberately and with such serious faces that it was exceedingly amusing.

Rice is grown nearly everywhere in Japan, even in positions and soils where other crops would probably be more profitable. We walked through many rice fields, both dry and wet (lowland and upland rice, I suppose it should be called), and succeeded in getting a series of pictures that show how the rice is handled. Many women work in the fields, some digging with great heavy hoes. They remind one of Mr. Markham's "Man with the Hoe," but instead of bearing the weight of centuries, these lively damsels



A LITTLE WAYSIDE SHRINE

appear happy, and often sing at their work, in a manner to delight the heart of Carlyle.

Throughout our trip we found by the roadside little images of wood or stone sometimes set up by the trunk of a tree, sometimes on a little eminence, with a tiny house built over them to protect them from the weather. Most of these images have little bibs tied about them, and sometimes an offering of coin or other nature laid before them. The country people, especially, seem religious, but when we see them bowing and praying to such images of wood and stone, we pray that the time may soon come when they may learn of the true God.

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